

HTQ Approvals – 09 April 2025

Session details: This session provided a preview of a forthcoming report - The Higher Technical Qualifications Approval Process in England: A Review – commissioned by the Gatsby Foundation to take stock of the experiences of awarding bodies that have successfully navigated one or more of the five cycles of the IfATE HTQ approvals, at the point at which HTQ oversight is transitioning to Skills England. A link to the report will be circulated to the group shortly, and slides were circulated to attendees following the session.

In the session we additionally heard about the experiences of one awarding body (UCLAN) and the approach they have taken to HTQ approvals. A case study written by Megan Critchley was circulated following the meeting and can additionally be found on the UVAC HTQ Network page (for members) and the HTQ Network Linked In group. If you are not a member of the Linked In group you can ask to join by clicking here:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12734110/>

About the speakers:

Liz Cleaver - is UVAC Associate and through the experience of supporting one institution through the HTQ approvals process, and her limited knowledge, decided to convene this group to create a peer-support network.

Megan Critchley – is Senior UK Partnerships Officer at the University of Central Lancashire.

Following the presentations attendees were asked to contribute to a discussion based on the following questions:

- Do these findings resonate with your own institution’s experiences?
- What would make the approvals process better for you?
- What – in an ideal world – would you lose from the approvals process?
- Do you have any stellar advice or intel to pass on?

Attendees noted the following in response:

- One of the main challenges identified in Cycle 2 was brand awareness. Despite requiring employer endorsement, the brand was still relatively unknown, making it difficult to gather a group of employers for endorsement.

- The main challenge was that the approvals process took so long (in the early cycles) that the qualifications needed revalidating almost as soon as they went live. This meant they were no longer officially HTQs until they went through the approval process again.
- The employer requirement is excessive, especially as the qualification is already mapped to an employer-generated standard.
- If an HTQ is already part of an apprenticeship (and therefore mapped to the occupational standard) approval should be automatic.
- Having a single route application process, where one person/team receives all communications and works with IfATE can ensure that miscommunication is reduced. A project management approach with clear responsibility and named individuals (ideally an oversight group) is key to maintaining institutional legacy knowledge.
- These points aside, colleagues delivering the qualifications are beginning to note that employers are starting to see them as a genuine (and less complex) alternative to apprenticeships and commercial programmes.
- Important to keep conveying the benefits to learners before and throughout the HTQ - induction, tutorials, pastoral care, and explicit reference on certificates.

Finally, we left colleagues with the question: **Is there anything further that UVAC can support you with?** For those who are not members information about joining (very reasonable rates!) can be found here <https://uvac.ac.uk/about/membership/>